

A socialist strategy to oppose war and defend democratic rights

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The following statement is being distributed by supporters of the Socialist Equality Party at the April 20 demonstration in Washington DC, called to oppose the war in Afghanistan, the US-backed Israeli invasion of the West Bank and the assault on democratic rights.

Seven months after Bush proclaimed his “war on terrorism,” it has assumed the form of a global campaign of violence to secure the interests of US imperialism. The White House seized on the terror attacks of September 11 as a welcome pretext for implementing policies—an escalation of US military aggression and an assault on democratic rights—long advocated by the most reactionary sections of the US ruling elite.

The American military has been unleashed against the people of Afghanistan. US forces have been dispatched to the former Soviet republics of Georgia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, as well as to Yemen, Pakistan and the Philippines. Preparations are well advanced for a military assault against Iraq, aimed at turning the oil-rich nation into an American protectorate. The Pentagon and the CIA have also intensified their operations in Colombia and throughout Latin America, as seen in the recent abortive coup in Venezuela.

The use of overwhelming firepower against a defenseless population has found concentrated expression in Israel’s atrocities on the West Bank. Using desperate terrorist actions incited by its own policies as the pretext, the Zionist regime is conducting a war to destroy the political and social infrastructure of the Palestinian people. This is a crime of historic proportions for which not only Sharon, but also Bush and the entire American ruling elite are responsible.

Recent events have demonstrated that imperialism does not belong to the distant past. The US ruling elite is seeking to establish global hegemony, first and

foremost in those regions of the world, such as the Middle East and Central Asia, which are rich in oil and other key resources. The Bush administration epitomizes the ruthlessness of corporate America, which wants unchallenged domination over the world market and the lifting all restraints on the accumulation of profit and personal wealth.

At home this takes the form of an unprecedented attack on democratic rights, intensified state repression and the creation of an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. A shadow government has emerged, which issues executive fiats undermining constitutional guarantees of privacy, due process and free speech. Arab and Muslim immigrants are rounded up and held indefinitely without access to legal counsel and without being charged. Political dissent is branded “aid and comfort to terrorists.”

Despite the efforts of the government and the media to promote jingoism and pro-war sentiment, the feelings of working people are quite different. They are concerned over layoffs, growing indebtedness, soaring health care and housing costs, the decay of the schools, and a permanent state of economic insecurity. The majority are distrustful of the government and view the military violence overseas with suspicion and apprehension.

There is no avenue within the existing political setup, however, for the working class to express its opposition to Bush’s policies. Any significant difference between the Republican and Democratic parties has disappeared on all critical questions. The Democrats have given their enthusiastic support to Bush’s open-ended war policy, with Al Gore and Joseph Lieberman beating the war drums against Iraq and defending Sharon’s crimes against the Palestinians.

As those who have come to Washington to protest know, the corporate-controlled news media function as

propaganda agencies for the Pentagon, the CIA and the White House. The media offer nothing but lies and distortions. They censor critical viewpoints the better to disorient and manipulate public opinion.

For those looking for a way to oppose imperialist war and defend basic rights, the Socialist Equality Party offers a revolutionary alternative to capitalist politics. Protest demonstrations in and of themselves will not put an end to US militarism or the assault on democratic rights.

An effective and viable anti-war movement requires a program based on the lessons of history and an insight into the structure of American society and world economic relations. It must be based on the one social force that is more powerful than the imperialist state—the working class.

Militarism and repression are the inevitable products of a social system based on the exploitation of the vast majority—those who work and produce the wealth of society—by a privileged minority—those who monopolize the means of production and subordinate social needs to private gain. There is an organic connection between military violence and state repression and the widening economic chasm between capitalist and worker that characterizes the profit system all over the world.

A political movement against war must therefore be directed against the capitalist system. It must be a movement of the working class, independent of and opposed to the two political parties of big business, the Democrats and Republicans. It must be based on the fundamental principle that all working people are objectively united in a common struggle against a common oppressor. It must embrace the standpoint of internationalism and oppose all political programs based on nationality, race, ethnicity or religion.

Imperialist war is not simply the policy of this or that political leader or party. It emerges from the profit system and the drive by corporations and banks to secure control over the world's natural resources, markets and labor. It cannot be stopped by appeals to capitalist politicians or imperialist-dominated institutions like the United Nations.

Only after the world economy is brought under the democratic control of the working people—the vast majority of the world's population—can the economic and national conflicts that lead to war be abolished and

world peace truly be established. Only in that way can the world's producers cooperate and utilize the advances in technology to vastly raise living standards, eradicate poverty, disease and ignorance, and eliminate inequality between nations and between the rich and poor.

Since its establishment four years ago, the *World Socialist Web Site* has fought to bring this perspective to an international audience through its daily analysis of world events. The WSWS has become the most widely read socialist publication on the Internet and a rallying point for all of those throughout the world seeking to build a new international socialist movement.

We encourage all those attending today's demonstration to promote the *World Socialist Web Site* and work actively to build its readership. We urge you to contribute articles and support the WSWS financially. We further urge you to study the program and history of the Socialist Equality Party and make the decision to join and build it.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact